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Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7726th meeting
Wednesday, 29 June 2016, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Delattre	(France)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Gimolieca
	China	Mr. Xu Zhongsheng
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	Malaysia	Mrs. Adnin
	New Zealand	Mr. Van Bohemen
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Ciss
	Spain	Mr. De la Calle Garcia
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Mr. Pressman
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Suárez Moreno

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force for the period from 1 March to 20 May 2016 (S/2016/520)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force for the period from 1 March to 20 May 2016 (S/2016/520)

The President (*spoke in French*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2016/578, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by the Russian Federation and the United States of America.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2016/520, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force for the period from 1 March to 20 May 2016.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Angola, China, Egypt, France, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Russian Federation, Senegal, Spain, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

The President (*spoke in French*): The draft resolution received 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2294 (2016).

I shall now give the floor to the members of the Security Council who wish to make statements after the voting.

Mr. Van Bohemen (New Zealand): Let me begin by expressing New Zealand's sincere condolences to the people and the Government of Turkey over the attacks at the Istanbul airport.

The United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) plays a critical role as a stabilizing force in an extremely troubled region. We strongly support the mission and we want to see it return to full functionality as soon as possible. Therefore, we are open to an incremental return to the area of separation, but we need to bear in mind the circumstances that led to UNDOF withdrawing in the first place.

The deteriorating security situation had generated a sustained crisis, which saw several long-standing contributing countries withdraw from the mission, and culminated in October 2014 with the kidnapping of 45 Fijian peacekeepers by armed extremist groups. These incidents were extremely damaging to UNDOF and to United Nations peacekeeping more generally. United Nations personnel were put in unacceptable situations of risk, with inadequate plans for a rapid exit. The incidents in the Golan exposed concerning flaws within the United Nations processes for assessing risk and engaging with troop-contributing countries. We need to be confident that we have changed the way we operate to ensure that such events are not allowed to happen again.

The security situation in the area of separation remains dangerous and unstable. It is a war zone in which armed extremist groups remain a real and constant threat, and the reality is that UNDOF personnel are likely to continue to be targeted. New Zealand argued strongly in the process leading up to the adoption of resolution 2294 (2016) today that, as the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) takes forward its plans for an incremental return, it must be clear that any return should take place only if the necessary conditions being met to ensure that it can be done safely and effectively. It must be based on a robust assessment of the security situation, which must be kept under continuous review, and DPKO needs to keep the Council updated regularly. UNDOF personnel must also be provided with the technology and equipment necessary for them to carry out their mandate safely.

As the Secretary-General has made clear, it is essential that the parties to the Disengagement of Forces Agreement play their part in enabling the return of UNDOF, including by facilitating the establishment of secure temporary crossing procedures and enabling the mission's use of technology and equipment necessary for its safety.

In early May, New Zealand hosted a meeting for troop-contributing countries, the Secretariat and Council members as part of our triangular consultations initiative. We also engaged bilaterally with a number of the most affected troop-contributing countries in the lead-up to today's adoption. Troop-contributing countries shared our concerns about the ability of UNDOF personnel to operate safely in the area of separation. They emphasized the need for UNDOF troops to have the equipment they need to do their jobs.

New Zealand proposed a number of amendments to the draft text. We are pleased that some changes were made, even though they do not fully reflect the extent of our concerns or those conveyed to us by some troop-contributing countries. This outcome is in no small part due to the brief time we had to consider the resolution. Given the serious issues involved, particularly with regard to the safety of United Nations personnel, one working day for consultation is unacceptable.

We will continue to engage with Council members and troop-contributing countries further in the months ahead, particularly in advance of the 90-day review in September and the next UNDOF mandate renewal in December. We also encourage DPKO and those that assert the right to hold the pen on this issue to stay in close contact with troop-contributing countries as their plans advance to ensure that they retain the full confidence and support of troop-contributing countries. We trust that the next mandate renewal will allow for more time for Council members to consider the serious issues at stake.

The meeting rose at 10.15 a.m.